

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 EB-11 FEA-02 INT-08 SCI-06

TRSE-00 OMB-01 NEA-11 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 SS-20 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 STR-08 CEA-02 NSC-10

DRC-01 /155 W

----- 086720

R 250827Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3810

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 0136

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E O 1165 UGDS

TAGS: PFOR ENRG LT

SUBJ: LESOTHO ENERGY PROBLEMS

REF : A. STATE 13050 (NOTAL)

B. MASERU 23

1. RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR GOL OFFICIALS INDICATE
THEY BELIEVE SOUTH AFRICA HAS CUT PETROLEUM FULE SUPPLIES
30 PER CENT. LESOTHO NOTIFIED OF THIS CUT AT TIME SOUTH
AFRICA ASKED LESOTHO TO ADOPT SAME CONSUMPTION RESTRICTIONS
IT IMPOSING. IN ADDITION PERMSEC FONAFFAIRS MASHOLOGU TOLD
EMBOFF JAN 23 THAT HE HAD RECEIVED CALL FROM PRETORIA PRE-
VIOUS EVENING THAT SAG WANTED LESOTHO TO ABSORB FURTHER CUT
OF 20 PER CENT AND HOPED IT COULD BE DONE VOLUNTARILY.

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2. IN MARKED CONTRAST, OIL COMPANY OFFICES (CALTEX, MOBIL, SHELL) INFORM EMBASSY LESOTHO RECEIVING SAME SUPPLIES AS SIX MONTHS AGO. ALL ARE VOLUNTARILY CUTTING BACK ORDERS FROM SOUTH AFRICAN DISTRIBUTORS AS DEMAND IS DOWN WITH RETAILING HOURS CURTAILED.

3. LESOTHO STILL FORGING AHEAD WITH EFFORTS TO MEET LONG-TERM NEEDS. MASHOLOGU SAYS LESOTHO WILL NOT NEED RATIONING AS IT HAS GUARANTEED SOURCE WITH ONE OR TWO DETAILS TO BE WORKED OUT. HE DECLINED FURTHER COMMENT BUT NOTED MIL PROBLEMS NOW OCCUPYING MUCH LESS OF HIS TIME. HE REPORTED MEETING IN GABORONE JAN 16 (CHANGED FROM JAN 11 DATE REPORTED REFTEL B) INCONCLUSIVE AS SWAZIS NOT PRESENT. NO BLS POSITION THEREFORE ESTABLISHED. MASHOLOGU SAID MEETING USEFUL HOWEVER AS IT GAVE OPPORTUNITY TO BRIEF BOTSWANA ON LESOTHO'S POSITION AND LESOTHO STILL PUTTING GREAT STOCK IN BOTSWANA'S MEMBERSHIP ON OAU GROUP OF SEVEN.

4. COMMENT: THERE ARE NO SIGNS HERE OF COUNTRY SUFFERING FROM A 30 PER CENT CUTBACK FOR SEVERAL WEEKS AND WE ARE STRONGLY INCLINED TO ACCEPT OIL COMPANIES' ASSESSMENT. MASHOLOGU DISPUTED THIS ASSESSMENT BUT NOT CONVINCINGLY. CONCLUSION WE REACH IS THAT LESOTHO IN PROCESS OF CAPITALIZING ON OIL SCARE TO SECURE INDEPENDENT SOURCE OF SUPPLY. GOL WOULD NOT THEREFORE WANT IT KNOWN THAT CURRENT SOUTHERN AFRICAN EMBARGO SO FAR WITHOUT EFFECT ON LESOTHO SUPPLY SITUATION. MASHOLOGU HAS SEVERAL TIMES CITED BELIEF THAT PRESENT EMBARGO ONLY THE BEGINNING AND THAT MORE SEVERE MEASURES AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA WILL FOLLOW. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES INDEPENDENT OIL SOURCE WOULD BE SEEN AS HIGHLY DESIRABLE. SAG GAVE ITS BLESSING TO SUCH A VENTURE IN EARLY MEETINGS AFTER EMBARGO IMPOSED. WE ARE UNAWARE OF IDENTITY OF LESOTHO'S "GUARANTEED SOURCE" BUT SPECULATE LIBYA HEADS LIST OF OIL PRODUCERS FROM WHOM LESOTHO SEEKING SYMPATHETIC TREATMENT.
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